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FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

A MEMORIAL.

BY

FREDERIC S. COZZENS.

READ BEFORE THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, JANUARY 6, 1868.

NEW YORK:

MDCCCLXVIII.



Frederic Haller



Yours very truly
Fitz-Greene Halleck

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FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

A MEMORIAL.

MR. PRESIDENT :

MR. DUYCKINCK, the Chairman of the Committee to which I have the honor to belong, has prepared some resolutions, expressive of the sincere grief which this Society feels at the recent decease of FITZ-GREENE HALLECK. It devolves upon me, in accordance with a time-honored custom, to introduce them with a brief review of the career of our late illustrious associate. I am aware, however, of an increasing hoarseness, which will prevent me addressing you in person ; and as our excellent librarian, Mr. MOORE, has, at my solicitation, promised to take the load off my shoulders, I am only too happy to hand these papers to him.

THIS IS A NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY. It is a living register of deeds and men. From its accumulations of the records of the past—of the records of our common Country in general—we turn with more affectionate interest to those themes which are peculiarly *local*, to those acts which have added a lustre to this city, to those actors who have lived, and breathed, and moved among us ; who have formed a part of our crowded streets, and our busy thoroughfares.

If Longfellow should die, the streets of Boston would be draped in mourning! But although we display no outward signs of grief, we feel not less keenly, that there is a vacant space among us; that a statue has fallen from its familiar pedestal; that a spark of immortal fire has been quenched forever; and that he who used to be, peculiarly, the intellectual soul and centre of this vast metropolis, now lies silent, in a narrow grave, at Guilford!

A brief biographical sketch, collected from various sources, may be not uninteresting.

Fitz-Greene Halleck was born in Guilford, Connecticut, July 8th, 1790. On his mother's side, he was descended from the famous John Eliot, "the Apostle to the Indians," and his father filled an inconsiderable position, during the Revolutionary war, under Sir Henry Clinton. "My father," said Halleck to me, "was a British Commissary. But I am inclined to believe that this high-sounding title was a fiction. British and other commissaries, in the army, usually accumulate fortunes; but as my father made nothing out of the war, I think he must have been a *sutler*. And my opinion is," continued he, "that as a *sutler* transacts his business upon his own capital, and a commissary draws his funds from the military chest, that the chances of being an honest man *are in favor of the sutler!*"

In 1814 we find Mr. Halleck a clerk of Jacob Barker. The late Daniel Embury, formerly President of the Atlantic Bank of Brooklyn, at that time was Mr. Barker's cashier. He always spoke of Halleck with almost boyish affection. "When I found,"

said he, "that Jacob Barker's affairs were in such a state that an honest cashier could not remain with him, I spoke to Halleck about them, for I had determined to leave his office, and urged him to do so likewise. But Halleck replied, 'No! I will not desert the *sinking ship*; I will remain at my post. When misfortune comes, that is the very time to stand by one's friends.' And so," said Mr. Embury, "I left the office of Mr. Barker, and entered into the employ of John Jacob Astor. Some years after, Halleck followed me. By-and-by he rose to be Astor's chief book-keeper and confidential clerk."

It is very well known that Mr. Astor left Mr. Halleck in his will, when the latter was in the height of his fame, and pretty well advanced in years, an annuity of two hundred dollars. It is very well known, also, that Mr. Wm. B. Astor added to this a gift of ten thousand dollars. It was the first gift ever given by a wealthy man to a poet, in this country. It was certainly noble and generous. Opulence often pays thousands of dollars for a picture, to secrete in a private gallery; but the greater artist, the Poet, whose works ennoble mankind, is too often forgotten.

I asked Mr. Embury, one day, why it was that John Jacob Astor had left Halleck, his faithful clerk, only this trifling sum. "I think I can explain that," he said. "Halleck often used to joke Mr. Astor about his accumulating income, and perhaps rather rashly said, 'Mr. Astor, of what use is all this money to you? I would be content to live upon a couple of hundreds a-year, for the rest of my life, if I was only sure of it.' The old man remembered that," said Mr. Embury,

"and with a bitter satire, reminded Halleck of it in his will."

The commercial life of Halleck is interesting, inasmuch that it exhibits a chivalric sense of duty, and a noble disinterestedness. His first experience in New York brought him in contact with much subtle trickery and artful manœuvring; his later years exposed him to all the allurements which the accumulation of vast wealth, under his eyes, could furnish. But he was superior to either; and could alike honestly stand by Jacob Barker amid the wreck of his financial machinery, and indulge in quiet sarcasms on John Jacob Astor while the latter was building his colossal fortune.

In fact, he had a platform of his own, and he stood upon it! Money, whether honestly or dishonestly acquired, had no part in his aspirations. His birth-gift was poetry. He was a poet born, not made by circumstances. Not that he despised wealth, not that he despised rank, not that he despised power.

"No—a born poet;—at his cradle-fire
The Muses nursed him—as their bud unblown,
And gave him, as his mind grew *high* and *higher*,
Their ducal strawberry leaf's enwreathed renown."

It was that wreath he coveted. He wrought for it earnestly, he won it honestly, but in his sweet humility he never wore it.

One of the greatest charms of Halleck's character was his innate modesty. He did not care to rush into print. In the earlier part of his life, his poems were published anonymously. Like Irving, and

Drake, and Bryant, with a true gentlemanly instinct, he shrank from popular applause. But when the author of "Fanny," and the co-author of the "Croakers," could no longer preserve his disguise; when his old publisher, Coleman, broke the seals of secrecy, and he stood revealed; when he was sought after by the best society in New York, (and what a brilliant society it was in those *grand* old days!) when he was exposed to all the adulations of fashion, wealth, and intellect, he preserved his quiet balance, his modest, gentlemanly demeanor, and lived and moved an example worthy of imitation. When we reflect that, at this time, Halleck was the most popular poet in the country,—for Drake was dead and Bryant scarcely known,—and that no other American poet could be called his rival, we may well admire that unpretending modesty which always formed the chief charm in his character. Upon one occasion, in after-years, when he was invited to a brilliant party in New York, he declined the invitation, and said, quietly, to a friend, "I always avoided notoriety in my earlier days,—and I am too old a lion now to shake my mane in a lady's drawing-room."

While I have made the endeavor to bring before you a faint sketch of the character of the man, which you have done me the honor to invite me to elucidate, permit me to give a glance at the opposite of such a poet, and show you a Poet's Critic.

There is a class of unfortunates in this and in other literary countries, who, although blest with undoubted genius, are compelled by Fate and Publishers to blossom once a month. They are known by Gods and

Men as Magazine critics. They are the Euclids of imaginative composition, and reduce every thing in the sphere of fancy to a demonstration. Twelve times a year do these "inglorious Miltons" appear upon the surface of the earth. Twelve times a year are they quietly buried.

As time rolls on, Posterity rakes among the ashes of the Past for some live coals of genius, but it never disturbs the dust of critics. A magazine a month old is very old indeed. It is true, that some indiscriminating persons invoke the aid of the book-binder, and preserve these volumes,—persons with palatial residences, and a yawning chaos of shelves in that part of the mansion which the architect has set apart as—*The Library*. Its lower rounds are filled with standard works; and then the Magazines, in rich bindings, are high uplifted above the topmost round of the library-ladder. There—in dust and cobwebs—row on row—the serried volumes stand! never to be disturbed—except by the Auctioneer.

Prominent among the contributors to these luckless volumes are the literary critics. They vainly imagine that they have been hewing their way to the foremost rank in public opinion. By detracting from the reputation of those who have earned their bitter laurels—amidst toil, and poverty, and privation—they presume that the path to that glorious Temple is open and secure to them. It is a most unfortunate mistake. The true path for an American author to take is not to under-rate "Fanny" or the "Croakers," not to show how "Alnwick Castle" or "Marco Bozzaris" might have been improved, if the creator of these

poems had only been instructed properly in metre by the modest reviewer,—but to write a poem equal to any of them. That there are faults in these compositions may be true. But we may as well remember also, that although a thousand nameless architects have written essays to show how the Leaning Tower of Pisa should have been built, it still continues to hold its reputation as one of the Seven Wonders of the world, and still continues to lean.

Pardon this digression, and let me return to the direct path.

“The Evening Twilight of the Heart,” an exquisite poem, was published in the *Evening Post*, in October, 1818. Bryant’s “*Thanatopsis*” preceded this poem two years.

These we may call the corner-stones of American Poetry, hewn from the native quarry.

But the first efforts of genius do not always invoke the dear delightful responses of applauding thousands. Those who toil in the republic of letters often waste the midnight sweat of the brow in vain; at least, many years elapse before they are recognized.

Bryant’s “*Thanatopsis*,” and Halleck’s “*Twilight of the Heart*,” fell dead upon the public ear; for poetic taste had as yet been little cultivated in our country, forty years ago.

It is true that Philip Freneau, that brave old son of New York! had written some admirable poems during the Revolutionary war, some lines of which Byron, Campbell, and Scott did not hesitate to appropriate.

“ The Hunter and the Deer, a shade,”

was adopted by Campbell.

“ She walks the water like a thing of life,”

was gathered under the wing of Byron.

And Sir Walter Scott, in the introduction to the Third Canto of *Marmion*, made use of a striking image of our poet. Scott's lines are :

“ When Prussia hurried to the field
And snatched the spear—but left the shield.”

But in Freneau's poem on the battle of Eutaw, he says :

“ They saw their injured country's woe,
The flaming towns, the wasted fields,—
They rushed to meet th' insulting foe,
They took the spear—but left the shield.”

It is pleasing to recall these few lines of an ancient Knickerbocker poet. They are perhaps the only lines that were ever stolen in those days by eminent British authors, from this side of the Atlantic.

But the ode “To Ennui,” published in the N. Y. Evening Post, March 10th, 1819, and written by another Knickerbocker poet, Dr. Joseph Rodman Drake, and signed “Croaker,” was the spark that first fired the poetic train in America. This was followed the next day by another playful strain from the same pen, entitled “*On presenting the Freedom of the City in a Gold Box to a great General*,” the great General being Andrew Jackson, afterwards President of the United States, as some of the oldest members of the Historical Society may remember. On the very next day appeared the “*Secret Mine*,”

alluding to the toast of General Jackson at the Tammany Dinner ; on the next day appeared the "*Epistle to Mr. Potter, the Ventriloquist* ;" on the next day, "*The Battery War*," all written by Dr. Drake ; and on the same day (the 15th of March), Halleck's Address to Mr. Simpson, then manager of the old Park Theatre, signed Croaker, jr., and on the day after that, Drake's invitation to his unknown rival, proposing to make a poetical firm, as appears by the well-known verses :

TO CROAKER, JR.

" Your hand, my dear Junior ! we're all in a flame
To see a few more of your flashes !
The Croakers for ever ! I'm proud of the name,—
But brother, I fear, though our cause is the same,
We shall quarrel like Brutus and Cassius.

" But why should we do so ! 'tis false what they tell,
That poets can never be cronies ;
Unbuckle your harness, in peace let us dwell,
Our goose-quills will canter together as well
As a pair of Prime's mouse-colored ponies.

" Once blended in spirit, we'll make our appeal,
And by law be incorporate too ;
Apply for a charter in crackers to deal,
A fly-flapper *rampant* shall shine on our seal,
And the firm shall be Croaker & Co.

" Fun ! prosper the Union—smile, Fate, on its birth ;
Miss Atropos, shut up your scissors ;
Together we'll range through the regions of mirth,
A pair of bright Gemini, dropt on the earth,
The Castor and Pollux of quizzers."

Is this local ? The only allusion in it to New York, is Prime's mouse-colored ponies. But the head of the firm of Prime, Ward & King, famous bankers in

those days, would have no objection for his name to be sent down to posterity in a note, in the appendix to this most musical poem.

As I have said before, the first Croaker paper was published in the Evening Post, March 10th, 1819. The epistle "To Croaker, Junior," saw the light on the 16th of the same month. But besides these daily contributions to the Post, Drake had written a poem, and Halleck had written another, for the *National Advocate*, a newspaper edited by Major Noah, and both poems were published within the time in which the Croakers appeared in the Post. I mean to say, that in six days Halleck and Drake had written ten poems; and in those six days they had made the most conspicuous mark in American poetry.

When we examine these light satires, we find them by no means trifling. They are like the Italian chain-mail, delicate in fabric, but impervious to assault. The versification is as various as it is melodious. They are still read with delight, and I may add, that their spirit, their wit, their fancy, their *élan*, has not been equalled in this country.

Edgar A. Poe, whose versification has placed him somewhere in the ranks of poets, says, "that the political and personal features of these *jeux-d'esprit* gave them a consequence to which they are entitled on no other account." Other critics of less note urge, that, as they are merely local poems, they have lived their little life, and will be quietly forgotten, when the actors whose deeds they commemorate have passed from the scene. But there are others who do not agree with Mr. Poe and

his followers. They think that, with age, the Croakers will acquire a greater value,—that a hundred years hence they will be more appreciated than they are now.

In regard to the oft-repeated saying that these are only local satires, I may observe, that all satire, to be effective, must be directed at individuals, and individuals in particular localities. There are scores of satires launched against abstractions,—an Ode to Avarice here, a satire against Ambition there, and so forth. But Junius, and Swift, and Butler, and Dryden, Pope and Burns, and Byron and Churchill, selected their victims from living men, and preserved their otherwise anonymous names in an immortality of damnation.

It is the divine mission of the poet to give

“————to airy nothings
A *local* habitation and a name.”

The solitary traveller upon the frontiers of civilization,—in Montana, or Colorado,—approaches a log-cabin; and from the sound of voices within it, he learns, perhaps for the first time, that there is a river in Scotland called the “Doon,” which he never would have known, if Burns had not written of its bonny banks and braes. I wish we had some local poets,—that could tell us of Powles’ Hook, and Washington Heights, and Stony Point, and all the glorious points of historical interest on the Hudson.

“Vainly had Concord mourned its early dead,
Vainly had Charlestown burned and Warren bled,
Or Guilford’s loss, or Trenton’s capture been;
Eutaw’s red flood; or Monmouth’s trampled green:

Had the proud Hudson from her eyrie porch
Quenched the lone splendor of her beacon torch,
Yielded the trust her sister States consigned,
And lost, with Arnold, hope for human kind."

The number of Croaker poems collected and published by the Bradford Club is fifty. Some of them did not appear with the original papers, but have been interpolated in this edition.

Mr. Halleck told me, that after Drake's proposal to make a poetical firm, many of the Croaker papers were written in this wise. He, or Drake, would furnish a draft of the poem, and that one or the other would suggest any alteration or enlargement of the idea; a closer clipping of the wings of fancy; a little epigrammatic spur upon the heel of a line.

I doubt very much whether I have a right to disclose the method by which Poets work in their workshops, but as I am only repeating Halleck's ideas, I hold it to be no base betrayal of the craft. To show how delightful these joint labors were, to both these illustrious men, Halleck told me that, upon one occasion, Drake, after writing some stanzas and getting the proof from the printer, laid his cheek down upon the lines he had written, and looking at his fellow-poet, with beaming eyes, said, "O, Halleck, isn't this happiness!"

Mr. Halleck rarely spoke of his own productions indeed, he seemed to think very lightly of them. Yet he had an unbounded admiration for Drake. Drake, on the other hand, did not think his own poems worth publishing or acknowledging. One day, on my speaking of "Fanny" to Mr. Halleck, he said, "Ah, I do not pride myself upon any thing in it except

the quotation. You know the subject is not elevated. The story of a bankrupt, retail dry-goods merchant is not a poetical theme. But the motto is the very opposite of such a story, and therein lies the wit.

“ ‘A fairy vision
Of some gay creatures of the elements,
That in the colors of the rainbow live,
And play in the plighted clouds.

Milton.’ ”

Notwithstanding Halleck's reticence in regard to his own poems, he always delighted to talk of the poetry of other authors. He had committed to memory many of Campbell's poems, and his comments upon certain passages that he quoted were wonderfully acute and elucidative. Hohenlinden was one of his favorites.

“ ‘On Linden, when the sun was low,
All *bloodless* lay the untrodden snow.’

“There,” he would say, “I defy any painter to paint that landscape! The poet in one word, *bloodless*, anticipates the coming struggle, the clash of men and arms, the blood-stained field that is to be, the trampled snow,—and in his prophetic vision he paints it all in a word.

“And now see how the armies are marshalled!—Not by generals and adjutants, but by a supernatural drum at midnight! An inferior poet would have put all the officers in,—pioneers and all—aids and orderlies, to summon the armies to battle,—but Campbell only uses a drum!

“ ‘But Linden saw another sight,
When the *drum* beat at dead of night,
Commanding *fires of death to light*
The darkness of the scenery!

“And how are these armies brought into line? By officers of squadrons or battalions? No! but by other, supernatural agents—

‘By *torch* and *trumpet*, fast arrayed,
Each horseman drew his battle-blade.’

By the *drum*, by *torch*, and by *trumpet*, the deadly conflict is invoked, and the *fires of death* light up the vivid scenery.”

His admiration of Wordsworth was very great. In a letter written some years ago, he says, “I am delighted to agree with you in your estimation of Wordsworth’s poetry. His line,

‘High in the *breathless* hall the minstrel sate,’

is the perfection of art, or rather of the attribute.”

Of Jane Ingelow he says, in another letter, “She has the faculty divine, and when she ceases to imitate Tennyson, will be worth her weight in gold. At present her lines are beautiful perplexities, and her philosophy is like the Irishman’s pony, hard to catch, and worth little when you have caught him.” Of Sydney Smith he said, “His style is so perfect that you cannot substitute a word in place of one of his own, without damaging the force of the sentence.” His admiration of Bryant was not less sincere. At the time when he was prostrated by sickness at Bixby’s Hotel, in 1860, he repeated some lines of Bryant’s, just published in Putnam’s Magazine, with tears in his eyes, and said, “There, now, there is nothing better in the whole range of poetry than that!” At another time, upon mentioning Stratford-upon-Avon to him, he threw up his hands in admiration. “Stratford!” he

said—"Did you see Stratford? the loveliest spot of English scenery! It is the very place, in all England, where Shakespeare should lie. Was he not fortunate, to have such a place to repose in? What is a monument in Westminster Abbey compared with that? It is the very place for a poet to take his last rest. Shakespeare's grave, and the account of the burial of Tom Campbell, touched me more than any thing else in England."

He always expressed a great admiration for Charlotte Brontë. Upon my telling him, some years ago, that I had not read *Jane Eyre*, he said, "Thank God, I have got that advantage." In another letter he says, "Have you read the 'Bucktail Bards,' a very able and amusing work that appeared in 1819 or '20? If not, you will thank me for referring you to it, as a treasure of a book. Our friend Mr. Verplanck knows more about its author or authors than I do. (I may remark, *en passant*, that Mr. Verplanck and Judge Duer were the reputed authors of this rare book). I wish particularly to call your attention to an imitation of Coleridge contained in it—one of the best things, in its way, ever printed." In another letter, speaking of Mr. Verplanck, he says, "I wish you would prevail upon him to gather together the scattered-abroad children of his pen. As American specimens of English literature, his writings are proof that the waters of the well of English undefiled, can be drunk here in all their purity." He paid a very high compliment to the young author of *Baby Bell*. He says in a note to me, "I am happy to agree with you in your estimate of the young poet. He is much more than promis-

ing, and I hope you will persuade him to work on." He speaks of Tennyson's "Maud" in another part of the same letter:

"I find much in 'Maud' to admire, both in the old and the new sense of the word, and love and cherish. But it must be owned that many of the lines are without *hook or bait*, and many of the ideas would pass for nonsense at every toll-gate in criticism. Still, there is so much peculiarly Tennyson's own in it, in form and fancy, that we willingly tramp over its long beach of sand to gather his grains of gold, and shells and pebbles of beauty. For instance,

'—the cobweb woven across the cannon's throat,
Shall shake its *threaded tears* in the wind no more.'

Threaded tears! How true and Tennysonian!" Of Burns he said, "There was a speech made at the Burns festival, in which the speaker called Burns a man of the million. Now the fact is, Burns was not a man of *the* million, but a man of *a* million, and in this case the indefinite article is of greater value than the definite."

Upon the same occasion he referred to one or two luckless orators, who, in attempting to eulogize a man whose genius they did not comprehend, fell into some ludicrous mistakes. In alluding to this he said, "Poor Burns! he belonged to the militia, and his last dying request was, 'Don't let the awkward squad fire over my grave.' The other night, at that dinner, the awkward squad were firing away over his grave just as hard as ever." In his opinion, Faulconbridge in King John was Shakespeare's greatest creation—the most

truthful, chivalric, and original. Upon one occasion Halleck told me that he had not received over a thousand dollars in all his life, for all his writings. This was before he had received the handsome sum of five hundred dollars from Mr. Bonner, of the "Ledger," for Young America. "My first publisher failed," said he, "and this deterred me from venturing upon a literary life, and placed me in a counting-room."

He had a *quasi* admiration for lecturers. "I was in New Haven the other day," Halleck said, lifting his hat with that deferential air which always made a point in his discourses, "I was in New Haven, and you know that New Haven is to Connecticut, what Boston is to Massachusetts—the intellectual centre of the State. The ladies of New Haven are highly educated, literary women,—and as charming as any ladies can be anywhere. Well, one of these charming ladies said to me, 'Oh, Mr. Halleck! you should have been here a few evenings ago! We had such a delightful time! Mr. Curtis was here, and he gave us a lecture upon Sydney Smith. It was an evening to be remembered—a perfect feast of good things, and we listened to every word that dropped from his lips as if they were perfect pearls.'" And here Halleck, lifting his hat, as if he were addressing the lady in question, said, "Curtis is a very promising, good fellow; perhaps sometime hereafter he may make his mark; but pray tell me, *which* Sydney Smith was the subject of the lecture? Was it the hero of St. Jean d' Acre, or the eminent clergyman of the Edinburgh Review, the Dean of St. Paul's, and the wit, whose writings are so celebrated? Upon which," said

Halleck, with that familiar roll of the hat, "the lady hesitated, dropped her eyes, and replied, 'Mr. Halleck, I do not know which of them it was, but I know it was *one of them*.' And so," said Halleck, "I took some pains to inquire, and I found out that the lecture was not about either of the Sydney Smiths, but a lecture on Sir Philip Sydney."

Halleck's admiration of the genius of Byron was such as only a poet can appreciate. "You know," said he, "that Shakespeare has said, in *King John*,

‘To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
To seek the beauteous eye of Heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess ;’

but Byron has gilt refined gold and added a perfume to the violet ; he has thrown a charm over the sculptures of ancient Greece and Rome ; in the dying gladiator, he recalls the thoughts of 'his young barbarians there at play upon the banks of the far-off Danube ;' and again, too, 'the goddess lives in stone ;' what a line that is ! and over all the structures on the castellated Rhine, over Italy, Spain, and ancient and modern Europe, he has added a charm to art, and thrown a perfume on the violets of history, without 'wasteful or ridiculous excess.' When you go to Rome, when you travel up the Rhine, take Childe Harold with you."

If Halleck did not have a great admiration of publishers and booksellers, perhaps it sprung from the tuition of his commercial life. He said to me one day, "The best part of my life was spent in a count-

ing-room. I know what 'account-sales' means, and I never could get an 'account-sales' from my publishers."

Upon one occasion, when I met him in the magnificent bookstore of one of the prominent publishers, and the principal of the firm was present, he said, with that familiar lifting of the hat, after the few preliminary remarks,—“By the way,—do you remember the story of Dr. Samuel Johnson *dining behind the screen*? It is related that Dr. Johnson was invited by his publisher to dine with him, at the great table, when all the big wigs were to be present. But Dr. Johnson declined, and took his dinner in quiet, behind a screen. The common story is, that Johnson excused himself, because his clothes were too shabby to appear before such high company. That is a historical mistake; Dr. Johnson, by his learning, by his genius, by his intellectual birth-gift, was a gentleman; and as a gentleman, he would not dine with a publisher!”

When he was sitting to Elliott for his portrait, the latter said to him, “Mr. Halleck, when you were in England, you no doubt saw some of the eminent poets whom you admire so much,—how did you like Wordsworth?” “I did not see him,” was the reply. “Well, of course you saw your favorite Campbell?” “No, I did not see Campbell.” “Indeed! but you saw Tom Moore?” “No, I did not see any of them. In fact, I was like Scott’s stupid boy. He went to his father and said, ‘Father, I would like to travel through Europe to see the world, and I want you to supply me with the necessary funds for the purpose.’ Upon which his father replied, ‘What you desire is very

praiseworthy, and a creditable ambition worthy of a young man, and I would furnish you the means, did I not think your desire to see the world is not so great as my disinclination to have the world see you.' I went," said Halleck, "to see the world,—not to let the world see me." (It must be remembered that Halleck visited Europe in 1823, before he was generally known as a writer.) Then he added, "If I went abroad now, I would have different ideas. If those great poets were living, I should like to see them all."

When he heard that Browning, the poet, was married to Miss Elizabeth Barrett, he said, "Ah, I am glad of it—they will be able to understand each other."

He told an anecdote of Tom Moore and a Yankee boatman, one day, in illustration of a poet's fame :

Where'er beneath the sky of Heaven,
The birds of fame have flown.

It seems the author of the "Melodies," during a visit to America, had hired a boatman to convey him across Lake Ontario, from Lewisburg to Toronto. When they reached the latter place, Moore pulled out his purse to pay the fare, when the boatman, laying his hand upon the poet's wrist, said, "Not a cent from you, Tom Moore!" "Why," said Moore, surprised, "how did you know my name?" "Oh!" said the boatman, "I read it on your trunk; and me, and my wife, and my children, all know your Melodies by heart, and we sing 'em too, and do you think I'd take a cent from you, Tom Moore?" "It was the first time in my life," said Moore, "that I ever felt the fulness of

fame; it was the greatest compliment ever paid me in my life!"

There is no book like the Old Testament for poetry. "Study the ancient Hebrew," he would say, "These be thy Gods, O Israel!"

He was annoyed at carping critics, who found fault with Irving's Knickerbocker's History of New York. "There was no book like it; it was the only original book of the kind. A travestie of history! a travestie of what history! It is original, and full of Irving's genius. Historians are great pilferers from one another. A short time ago, I read a history of the siege of Quebec, in which the author stated that during the siege they drew the cannon on a *sled*, and a short time after, I read a description of the same event by another historian, which is word for word like the other one, except that he says they drew the cannon on a *sledge*. Now, there is history for you! Byron has given a good description of a historian. He says that Mitford is just what a historian ought to be. He is full of wrath and partiality!"

When he liked a poem he would copy it off, and get it by heart. He once gave me a poem, "The Death of Jacob," an Oxford prize poem, in seventy-seven stanzas, of four lines each, with notes, which he had copied from Littell's Living Age. He told me once, that he never put pen to paper until he had finished the verse. He always composed while walking, roaming about the streets of New York, generally at night.

While Hicks was painting his portrait, he said, "I see he has caught that peculiar expression of my

mouth, which some of my friends say is like Voltaire's, half smile, half sneer."

In many a past hour of uninterrupted intercourse with him, he never spoke of his own writings, nor alluded to them. If the subject was introduced, he managed to turn the conversation to some other topic.

I shall not venture upon a review of his writings, but will content myself with alluding to some of the opinions of his contemporaries as to his literary merits. James Fenimore Cooper called him "the admirable Croaker," and both he and Washington Irving always spoke of him in warm terms of admiration. Perhaps the most gratifying tribute paid to him was by Mr. Bryant, many years ago, in the *New York Mirror*, from which I beg leave to quote a few lines :

"His poetry, whether serious or sprightly, is remarkable for the melody of its numbers. It is not the melody of monotonous and strictly regular measurement. His verse is constructed to please an ear naturally fine, and accustomed to a range of metrical modulation."

Edgar A. Poe, in rather a harsh criticism upon his writings, says : "Personally, he is a man to be admired, respected, but more especially *beloved*. His address has all the captivating *bonhomie* which is the leading feature of his poetry, and, indeed, of his whole moral nature. With his friends he is all ardor, enthusiasm, and cordiality ; but to the world at large he is reserved, shunning society, into which he is seduced only with difficulty, and upon rare occasions."

Miss Mitford, in her *Recollections of a Literary Life*,

pays him a very high compliment, and quotes his "Young Thoughts have Music in them," from Fanny, and his lines to Drake.

Samuel Rogers, writing to Irving, in 1837, says : "With Mr. Halleck's Poems I was already acquainted, particularly with the first two in the volume, and I cannot say how much I admired them always. They are better than any thing we can do, just now, on our side the Atlantic. I hope he will not be idle, but continue long to delight us. When he comes here again, he must not content himself with looking on the outside of my house, as I am told he did once, but knock and ring, and ask for me, as for an old acquaintance. I should say, indeed, if I am here to be found ; for if he or you, my dear friend, delay your coming much longer, I shall have no hope of seeing either of you on this side the grave."

Rogers always spoke of Halleck, whenever his name was mentioned, in terms of highest praise. In the Messrs. Duyckinck's *Cyclopædia of American Literature*, there is a fine appreciative notice of him, which I would gladly quote if time would permit ; and the article contributed by Mr. James Lawson, of this city, to the *Southern Literary Messenger*, November 25th, 1843, although written with great cordiality, does not award to Mr. Halleck as high a position as he deserves. It is not assuming too much to say, that Halleck, in his line, has not been approached yet by any one in this country, and that his line is a very noble one indeed.

There is one error in regard to Fanny, which should be corrected. It is generally said of it, that it

is an imitation of *Don Juan*. Now, if you turn to Murray's edition of Byron's works, you will find that the first part of *Don Juan* was published in London in 1819, and if you turn to the edition of "Fanny," printed in 1839, you will see that it is reprinted from the edition of 1821, which had been enlarged and reprinted from the original edition of 1819. So that "Fanny" was published in the same year with *Don Juan*, and, of course, could not be an imitation. In fact, Mr. Halleck told me that "Fanny" was published before *Don Juan* had crossed the Atlantic, and that he had adopted the versification of *Beppo*, one of Byron's minor poems. But the story of *Beppo* is entirely different from either *Fanny* or *Don Juan*.

The last effort of Halleck is, I believe, a little epigrammatic quatrain, which he handed me one day. It was written in a lady's album :

" All honor to woman, the sweet-heart, the wife,
The delight of the fireside by night and by day,
Who never does any thing wrong in her life,
Except when permitted to have her own way."

Mr. President, and fellow-members of the Historical Society: I could employ your time for some hours longer upon this interesting theme, but the hour allotted to me has expired, and I must close with a brief personal sketch of the subject of this memorial.

Mr. Halleck was of medium stature; his real height was probably five feet nine inches, although a slight inclination of the body forward, in what might be called a deferential attitude, made him appear less tall than he really was. He was always scrupulously

neat in his dress and person—never over-dressed—and his manners were equally plain and unpretending. He was totally devoid of affectation, and although shy of strangers, at times, yet this quality, springing as it did from an innate modesty, united with the most perfect good-breeding, seemed rather to set him off among strangers, and make them feel more at home in his society than if he had been over-courteous or over-familiar. I remember, upon one occasion, when I had introduced him to a very talkative publisher, who said, “Have I, at last, the pleasure of taking the great Mr. Halleck by the hand? an honor I have coveted ever since I was a boy, and got his poems by heart,” and more of that sort,—that Halleck became suddenly very deaf, put his hand to his ear to try to make out what was said to him, and with a sad, puzzled expression on his face, shook his head as if it said, Dear me, I can’t hear a word of all this, what a pity! and yet all this was done in such a kindly, gentlemanly way, that it gave no offence to the person addressing him. He was always scrupulously correct in his dealings, no matter how trifling, and practised the greatest economy, so as to preserve his independence. He often used to refer to the fact that Burns, poor as he was, and a poet to boot, died without owing any one a single penny.

“Through care and pain, and want and woe,
With wounds that only death can heal—
Tortures—the poor, alone, can know,
The proud, alone, can feel,
He kept his honesty and truth,
His independent tongue and pen,
And moved in manhood, as in youth,
Pride of his fellow-men.”

In fact, Halleck's admiration of Burns, as a poet, was second only to his admiration of him as a man.

There was always a faint touch of punctilious politeness lingering about Halleck, such as we might imagine characterized the old French *noblesse* in their exile, and this accompanied with a never-failing *bonhomie*, a gentleness of manner, that even in his old age made women his friends and children his companions. But the real characteristics of our dear friend appeared, when he was talking with some congenial companion about the great poets he loved, with all the fervor of his soul. Then the domous head would seem to have gathered electric fire from the words that poured from his heart, the branching veins on his temples would suddenly shoot out, and swell, and enlarge. Then his blue eyes would dart out gleams of intellectual light, the projecting lower jaw would tremble with passion, the lips would quiver, one hand would pound another with expressive vehemence, and the foot, not less expressive, would respond, and when the heroic sentiment was reached, or pathos had carried all before it, then the voice would falter, the eyes fill, and you felt that the spell of living genius was upon you.

It has been often said, that Halleck's poems exhibit great artifice in their construction, and show the clearness and polish of laborious composition. This is partly true, but scarcely any poet knew better than he how to reach the highest art of all—the art of concealing art. Like the Sculptor in Schiller's poem of the Ideal and the Actual, he knew how to use his implements.

“When through dead stone to breathe a soul of light,
With the dull marble to unite
The kindling genius, some great sculptor glows;
Behold him straining every nerve intent,
Behold how, o’er the subject-element,
The stately thought with march laborious goes!
For never, save to toil untiring, spoke
The unwilling Truth from her mysterious well—
The statue only to the chisel’s stroke,
Wakes from its marble cell.

“But onward, to the sphere of beauty,—go
Onward, O Child of Art! and, lo,
Out of the matter which thy pains control
The statue springs! not as with labor wrung,
From the hard block, but as from nothing sprung,
Airy and light—the offspring of the soul!
The pangs, the cares, the weary toils it cost,
Leave not a trace when once the work is done—
The artist’s human frailty merged and lost,
In Art’s great victory won!”

The last poem of any length that Halleck wrote was entitled *Young America*, a war-lyric, published in the “*New York Ledger*,” in 1864. It is a spirited production, with many very beautiful lines, whose music recalls some of his earliest and best verses.

I could interpolate here many characteristic anecdotes of Halleck, but time warns me that I must conclude. In one of the last letters I received from him, he spoke of Mr. James H. Hackett, and proposed coming to the city especially to see him, and have a chat with him. It was proposed by Mr. Hackett to invite Mr. Halleck, Mr. Verplanck, and one or two other old friends to meet together, and have a good old-fashioned dinner. Halleck used to say, “Pretty much all my old friends are gone—except Bryant, Verplanck, and myself,—we are the last of the cocked hats.” But

the projected dinner was unhappily interrupted by the decease of the poet, in whose honor it was intended to be given. I met Mr. Hackett and Mr. Verplanck, and agreed upon the day when I was to notify Halleck—and an hour after that meeting, I heard the sad news of his death.

I now have the honor to introduce Mr. Duyckinck, the Chairman of this Committee, who will read the resolutions he has prepared.

Mr. DUYCKINCK thereupon submitted the following resolutions, which were adopted unanimously :

Resolved, That the Members of this Society, in common with their fellow-citizens and countrymen, express the sense of the loss which America has sustained in the death of FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

Resolved, That while knowing the author and paying that tribute of heartfelt admiration of his genius as a poet, which had been ever accorded by all acquainted with his writings, we cherish the recollection of his personal worth and amiability of character, the charm of his enlivened conversation, and the grace which his presence imparted to social life.

Resolved, That WM. CULLEN BRYANT, the life-long friend of the poet, be invited to prepare a memorial paper on the life and genius of Fitz-Greene Halleck, to be read before this Society at a special meeting, to be held for that purpose.

Resolved, That we express our sympathy with the surviving sister of our deceased friend, in the affliction which she has sustained in being deprived of her beloved brother and companion of many years.

Resolved, That a certified copy of these Resolutions be communicated to Miss Halleck.

Previously to offering the resolutions, Mr. Duyckinck presented the following communication relating to Mr. Halleck, which he had received, as Chairman of the Committee, from Mr. Frederic de Peyster.

76 UNIVERSITY PLACE, *January 7, 1868.*

EVERT A. DUYCKINCK, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,—The anxieties of a sick-room have prevented my attempting a thoughtful description of the traits of character which distinguished the late FITZ-GREENE HALLECK, as gathered from his works and my personal acquaintance with him.

I well remember when the *Croakers* first appeared. New York was then of limited extent in comparison with its present expansion. Its social circle was small indeed in contrast with its present Babel-like population, after "the confounding of language."

He at once took the town by storm, by his sparkling wit, genial humor, graceful and easy versification, salient satire, and happy allusions. Then came the Poet's "Fanny;" when his popularity became unbounded, and, with an alteration or two, a line of his own best describes the general sentiment—

"None named him but to praise."

In succession followed his other and equally successful publications. The popular feeling rose to enthusiasm, and has never subsided. He is one of the illustrious men of our country, with a name and fame imperishable.

Others will analyze and portray the characteristic features of the Poet's mind, and of his justly-earned and well-sustained celebrity furnish a faithful and merited delineation.

I pass from the well-remembered scenes of my youth, and of HALLECK in the ascendant, to the days when, in a ripe old age, full of earthly honors, he has descended into the tomb.

The day previous to his death he moved about as usual, and his step and his speech indicated no perceptible change.

He felt, however, a consciousness that his end was approaching; for a letter now before me states, that ere he retired to bed on that day, he observed to his sister that he would not live to see another pass away.

The hour is not stated when she entered his room after he had so gone to his bed; but from the circumstance that upon her entering he asked for an article of his dress, which he had placed in an adjacent chair, it is probable that it was on the ensuing morning. She had just turned to hand him his clothes, when he fell back on the bed, and, when she reached him, he *was dead*.

Thus departed this life, this distinguished man, whose name throughout our land is as familiar as "a household word," and whose fame is as imperishable as his works.

